Claims 1-22 are pending. Claims 1 and 2 are cancelled and Claims 3, 4, 6-9, 11, 12,

14, 15 and 17 have been amended so as to change their dependency.

The Examiner has noted that Applicant has not filed a certified copy of Belgium

010307. However, Applicant's maintain that such a copy was filed on May 24, 2006, as

evidenced by the enclosed documents.

Claims 1-21 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Rothwell

(U.S. 1,028,789) in view of Delruelle (U.S. 2,684,158). Applicants respectfully request

withdrawal of this rejection.

Amended Claim 21 recites continuous fluid filtration device, comprising filtration

cells each having an opening towards its top through which they are supplied with fluid to be

filtered, the cells being fitted with a filter bed which, in the filtration position of the cells

allows passage of a filtrate and retention of a filtration cake, and a bottom. Claim 21 further

recites that the cells are disposed in a carousel around a rotation axis and each cell arranged

so as to be able to pivot about a tilt axis tangential to a horizontal circle having the rotation

axis as its centre. Claim 21 recites means for supporting the filtration cells so that each cell

can perform a revolution about the rotation axis, means for driving the filtration cells in

revolution about the rotation axis, means for moving the filtration cells to cause a tilting

movement thereof about their tilt axis, during their revolution about the rotation axis, and

means for discharging the filtrate from the cells comprising at least one outlet orifice at the

Reply to Office Action Dated: July 6, 2006

bottom of each cell, a central collector and connection means allowing flow of the filtrate

between the said at least one outlet orifice and the collector.

Claim 21 also recites that said connection means for each cell comprise a flexible

conduit which is connected at a first end to said outlet orifice and at a second end to said

central collector, the outlet orifice and the flexible conduit being continuously arranged in a

radial section passing through the device during said complete revolution of said cell with

no area of the flexible conduit lower than another area of this conduit situated downstream

with respect to the flow of the filtrate, the flexible conduit in the filtration position of the cell

extending downwards from said outlet orifice along a substantially vertical axis and then, at a

height lower than the tilt axis, being angled in the direction of the collector with a continuous

downward slope, and the flexible conduit in tilting position of the cell extending substantially

horizontally from the outlet orifice as far as the tilt axis, and being then angled in the

direction of the central collector with a continuous downward slope. None of the cited

references teach or disclose, either alone or in combination, all of the elements recited in

claim 21.

For example, Rothwell teaches a separating device comprising a carousel of filtration

cells wherein the cells are able to tilt around a tilt axis tangential to a horizontal circle having

the rotation axis of the carousel as its center. This patent was already discussed in page 2,

lines 15 to 23 of the present specification. In Rothwell, in order to discharge the filtrate, each

cell is provided with a succession of rigid conduits 3a, 3b, 13 and 14 reciprocally connected

in a water tight manner. The rigid conduit 3a is connected to an outlet orifice provided in the

Reply to Office Action Dated: July 6, 2006

bottom of the cell and is arranged vertically in filtration position and horizontally in tilted

position. The other rigid conduits 3b, 13 and 14 are continuously arranged horizontally

during the complete revolution of the cell, the conduits 13 and 14 being connected to a

central collector. The conduit 3b is coaxial with the tilt axis. The conduits reciprocally

rotate during the tilting of the cell and, therefore it is difficult to ensure a secure tightness

between the conduits. Moreover, no portion of said set of rigid conduits extends up to a

height lower than the tilt axis and the outlet orifice. Additionally, the rigid conduits are not

continuously arranged in the same radial section of the device.

Finally, the set of conduits as discussed in Rothwell have a double function. Firstly,

discharging the filtrate into the collector and secondly, acting as driving means for the upper

movable disk of this collector. The device taught in Rothwell does not teach a flexible

conduit which is connected at a first end to said outlet orifice and at a second end to said

central collector, the outlet orifice and the flexible conduit being continuously arranged in a

radial section passing through the device during said complete revolution of said cell\_with

no area of the flexible conduit lower than another area of this conduit situated downstream

with respect to the flow of the filtrate, as recited in claim 21.

Delruelle describes a continuous horizontal rotary filter wherein the cells are able to

tilt around a radial axis. Each cell comprises an outlet orifice 32 situated in the bottom

thereof at an external corner. As it results from Figure 5, a flexible conduit 41 is connected

to this orifice, and is introduced within a radially extending shaft 3. Therefor the conduit 41

must be bent. Thereafter, the conduit 41 passes through the internal front wall of the cell and

Reply to Office Action Dated: July 6, 2006

is connected to a central collector. The outlet orifice 32 and the conduit are consequently not

arranged in the same radial section of the device.

In the filtration position, the portion of the conduit 41, which is within the shaft 3 is

arranged horizontally and the portion which is out of the cell extends slightly downwards to

the collector (see FIG. 2). As it results from col. 5, lines 18 to 28 and from Col. 7, lines 1 to

13, the outlet orifice 32 is intentionally positioned in said external corner of the cell in order

that this orifice will be lowermost when the filter cell is tilted about the shaft 3. According to

Delruelle, this step ensures a complete draining of the liquid. In this tilted position the

portion of the flexible conduit 41 connected to the orifice 32 is twisted downwards and is

consequently in a lower position than the portion of this conduit situated downstream with

respect to the flow of the filtrate. Moreover the so arranged flexible conduit must be able to

withstand to twisting or torsional displacements of 180° between its ends (see col. 6, 1. 18 to

22). The device taught in Delruelle does not teach the device recited in claim 21.

Applicants maintain that it would not have been obvious to one of ordinary skill to

combine the teachings of Rothwell with the teachings of Delruelle for the following reasons.

First, the continuous horizontal rotary filter of Delruelle is of the type accurately

disclosed in the present patent application from page 1, line 27 to page 2, line 13. This filter

is exactly what the Applicant is trying to avoid because such filters are encumbering. In such

a condition, a skilled person having knowledge of Rothwell, which avoids this disadvantage

of loss in filtering surface, would not be prompted to use the teaching of the Delruelle which

shows this disadvantage.

Reply to Office Action Dated: July 6, 2006

Second, the discharging conduits 3a, 3b, 13, and 14 of Rothwell have, as above

disclosed, a double function. In order to fulfill the function of rotating the upper disk of the

collector, these conduits must absolutely be rigid. In this condition, a person of ordinary skill

in the art would not have been motivated, in light of Rothwell, to replace in his device the set

of rigid conduits 3a, 3b, 13 and 14 by a flexible conduit. With a flexible conduit the

complete device would be *unable* to work.

Finally, even if a person of ordinary skill in the art, having knowledge of the

Rothwell, had decided to use a flexible conduit as disclosed in Delruelle, he would not obtain

a continuous filtration device as recited in claim 21. Claim 21 recites a flexible conduit

which is connected at a first end to said outlet orifice and at a second end to said central

collector, the outlet orifice and the flexible conduit being continuously arranged in a radial

section passing through the device during said complete revolution of said cell with no area

of the flexible conduit lower than another area of this conduit situated downstream with

respect to the flow of the filtrate, the flexible conduit in the filtration position of the cell

extending downwards from said outlet orifice along a substantially vertical axis and then, at a

height lower than the tilt axis, being angled in the direction of the collector with a continuous

downward slope, and the flexible conduit in tilting position of the cell extending substantially

horizontally from the outlet orifice as far as the tilt axis, and being then angled in the

direction of the central collector with a continuous downward slope.

If one of ordinary skill in the art introduces in the cells of the Rothwell device a

flexible conduit as provided in Delruelle from the beginning of the tilting step, the portion of

Application Serial No.: 10/697,601

Amendment Dated: November 6, 2006

Reply to Office Action Dated: July 6, 2006

the conduit connected to the outlet orifice situated in the external corner of each cell will be

lower than the area of this conduit situated at the internal side of the cell. Such an

arrangement is to be excluded according claim 21. Moreover, during the tilting, the internal

side of the cells of Rothwell is progressively elevated by rotation around said tangential axis.

Consequently the distance between this internal side, from which the flexible conduit goes

out from the cell according to the teaching of the Delruelle, becomes progressively greater,

and the flexible conduit is submitted to an unacceptable elongation.

For these and other reasons, the cited art does not disclose the subject matter defined

by independent Claim 21. Therefore, Claim 21 is allowable along with all claims which

depend from the same for the same reasons and also because they recite additional patentable

subject matter.

Application Serial No.: 10/697,601 Amendment Dated: November 6, 2006 Reply to Office Action Dated: July 6, 2006

Applicant respectfully requests that a timely Notice of Allowance be issued in this case.

Respectfully submitted,

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